



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
June 25, 2007
5:00 P.M.
Council Office

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

V. Spencer, S. Fuhs, S. Marmarou, M. Baez, J. Waltman, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, D. Sterner

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

C. Kanezo, C. Younger, L. Churchill, H. Tangredi, D. Cieniewicz, L. Kelleher, R. Hottenstein, C. Jones, F. Denbowski, D. Miller, M. Setley, D. Glaze

I. Meeting with RAWA

Mr. Miller asked Council to consider the fact that no billing system, regardless of management, will operate without complaint. Mr. Miller stated RAWA desired to establish a parallel billing system. RAWA has no desire to remove the City from performing exiting functions; however, parallel billing systems would prevent delays and other errors from occurring in the future. Mr. Setley agreed that a parallel system would improve the quality of operations. Mr. Setley believed a parallel system would provide an appropriate level of redundancy.

Ms. Glaze emphasized IT interference in billing operations could not continue. Ms. Glaze acknowledged that cooperation between IT and RAWA is important and necessary not, however, at the expense of unnecessary interference. Ms. Glaze thought the customer was failed by circular disagreements between IT and RAWA. Mr. Churchill offered to respect existing processes, provided respect for proper accounting practices is shown. Mr. Churchill acknowledged that future discussions between RAWA and the City would likely be better if had with the Finance Director, or Managing Director; IT as a back office function should be excluded from policy discussions.

Mr. Sterner asked how the City would respond to a system failure. Mr. Tangredi stated the response would depend upon the degree of failure. Information backups would allow for a reconstruction of lost data within a 24-48 hour period. Mr. Sterner

asked if a system loss would result in billing delays. Mr. Tangredi stated billing would not be delayed.

Mr. Tangredi explained how the present billing process operates. Copies of charts illustrating the process were provided (see attached).

Ms. Glaze remarked that the present system is inadequate, as it is too reliant on IT, which as an organization is too reliant on automation. Mr. Tangredi explained that lack of staff, combined with other requirements, necessitates greater reliance on automation. Mr. Tangredi felt billing operations are carried out as efficiently as possible, considering errors in information provided by the Water Authority.

Mr. Waltman thought the issue presented to Council was a fundamental disagreement between Administration and Authority over responsibility for data management. Mr. Waltman asked how data is currently managed. Mr. Tangredi stated data is maintained and secured by City systems. Under current arrangements RAWA is free to access data, provided approval is granted by the Managing Director. Mr. Churchill remarked that he has no problem allowing the Water Authority access to any information they require.

Mr. Setley discussed concerns certain board members have with existing data access arrangements. Mr. Setley referenced 2005 billing errors as justification for greater Water Authority oversight. Ms. Cieniewicz explained the reported losses in 2005 were not actual losses; revenue was in place, though not entered into the system correctly. The error was due to technological difficulties associated with the inauguration of a new billing system.

Mr. Spencer asked the Water Authority and the Administration to resolve any disputes. Mr. Spencer explained the citizens of Reading and participating municipalities suffer when both organizations are at odds. Mr. Churchill agreed to work with Mr. Miller towards resolving data management and billing issues. Mr. Miller agreed to work with Mr. Churchill towards accomplishing the same goals.

II. Solid Waste Ordinances

Mr. Waltman thought both concepts presented for consideration were worthy of adoption. Mr. Waltman stressed how the Solid Waste Commission would not be at cross purposes with the Clean City Coordinating Committee. It was Mr. Waltman's opinion that the Commission would focus largely on issues related to trash, while the committee would cover a broad range of quality of life issues.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz supported the concept of forming a standing commission responsible for addressing systemic trash issues. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz thought any committee should be a semi-permanent organization, devoted to education, outreach and implementation. Mr. Denbowski explained how the proposed committee stems from a liter task force, created by the Mayor and charged with developing recommendations for liter removal. One suggestion was the establishment of a permanent group, which would be resident driven.

Mr. Denbowski agreed that two organizations could operate without competing or duplicating efforts.

Mr. Fuhs questioned how process oriented individuals could support the present solid waste removal system, with all the apparent flaws and complications. Mr. Fuhs suggested Council leave the responsibility of cleaning the City with the Administration. Mr. Waltman thought it would be better to assist the Administration.

Mr. Churchill suggested combining both proposals creating, in essence, a new organization responsible for: policy development and education. The result of merging the two concepts is a Clean City Commission. The Commission would include representatives from the Administration, Council and public and assume responsibility for developing educational materials, initiating contact with the community at large and assisting with policy formulation. Mr. Waltman agreed with the proposal, provided public representation outweighed official representation. Mr. Churchill suggested Council determine the appropriate number and composition of the Commission.

III. Agenda Review

Mr. Churchill supported the proposed agreements with Berks Community Television (BCTV), as the agreements represented, in his opinion, a fair and appropriate use of tax payer dollars. Under the terms of the proposed agreements, BCTV would receive monies for capital improvements and increases in annual appropriations consistent with the rising costs of transacting business.

Mr. Spencer asked how proposed capital grant funds would be spent. Mr. Churchill indicated capital grant funds would be used to upgrade equipment, once upgraded BCTV would be capable of broadcasting in a digital format. Mr. Spencer asked how \$192,000.00 in capital funding was provided. Mr. Churchill explained capital funding was part of the franchise renewal agreement reached with Comcast. Mr. Churchill noted the original request for capital upgrades submitted by BCTV was substantially higher; however, Comcast deemed \$192,000.00 the minimum amount necessary to enable digital upgrades.

Mr. Spencer inquired if the City would need to approve purchases made by BCTV. Mr. Churchill stated BCTV would be free to spend all monies provided, in any manner the organization chose, except as might be forbidden by agreement. Mr. Spencer strongly objected to providing funds to BCTV without having an appropriate oversight mechanism in place. Mr. Fuhs agreed with Mr. Spencer, adding that the City should not be so quick to give up funds, which could be better used to support other municipal projects.

Mr. Fuhs explained he does not object to BCTV; however, City Council and the Administration are charged with managing meager resources and allocating those resources for the citizens' betterment. Mr. Fuhs thought providing large capital grants when street lights go unlit and potholes unfilled is irresponsible.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz countered that providing abundant, quality educational programming is not a misuse of resources. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz asked members of Council to consider programs like: Inside Your District, Council Conversations and District Highlights. All programs produced by BCTV that benefit City Council, district constituents and the rest of the City of Reading.

The Committee of the Whole adjourned at 7:05p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

By: _____
Linda A. Kelleher, City Clerk